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INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0554
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1533

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 002515

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2018
TAGS: UN PHUM PREL EUN PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL SUPPORTS EU LINE ON UN THIRD COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

REF: SECSTATE 93981

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, Embassy Lisbon
Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (U) Portugal's MFA Director for Human Rights Sara Martins said Portugal plans to coordinate its human rights agenda with other EU member states and vote on Third Committee measures as a bloc. The GOP approved draft text for Third Committee resolutions, but Martins said Portugal was still waiting for France to circulate a final text. She welcomed the U.S. points and stressed that she looked forward to advancing common goals this session, especially on the freedom of expression and religious intolerance measures.

Country-specific Resolutions

¶12. (C) In response to reftel demarche, Martins said Portugal (and its EU partners) agree with the U.S. position on almost all of the U.S. points. She reported that Portugal fully backs Canada's resolution on Iran and told us that the EU was hopeful that its resolutions on Burma and the DPRK would enjoy slightly stronger support than last year when Portugal was EU President. On Zimbabwe and Sudan, she expressed concern that a resolution could serve as a rallying point for African nations and could put other resolutions in danger against a unified African bloc. While Martins admitted that it was important to make some statement on Zimbabwe and Sudan, she urged caution and even suggested that timing could be an important way to prevent the issue from hijacking other measures.

¶13. (C) Martins assured us that she understood the U.S. position on the Human Rights Council and admitted that Portugal shared our disappointment. Nevertheless, she reiterated the EU view that the HRC should be the primary forum for UN human rights action on Zimbabwe or Sudan, despite its shortcomings. The EU will not support a separate, parallel measure in the UN's Third Committee because, "We don't want to encourage forum shopping." Turning to Belarus, Martins said the EU was waiting to see how the September elections went before deciding whether to support a resolution. She acknowledged that it was highly unlikely that Belarus would change its stripes overnight, but held out the hope that a resolution might not be necessary this year if Belarus continues moving in the right direction.

Thematic Resolutions

¶14. (C) Portugal also supports reftel's proposed thematic resolutions and, under the auspices of the EU, plans to sponsor a full listing of human rights measures. Martins said France is coordinating several texts including resolutions against the death penalty and religious intolerance, and protecting free speech and preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation. She expressed

concern that the French Presidency might have overstretched the EU's lobbying capabilities since several of the measures were highly controversial. On the prisoners of conscience declaration, Martins suggested Geneva as the best location for the next public awareness campaign. She hailed the New York program as a strong start, but mentioned that, since many human rights NGOs are based in Geneva, a second program would reach more people and gain new support from an effort in Geneva.

STEPHENSON